

A Topic Based Lesson: All Kinds of Failure

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Introduction

This lesson is intended for upper-intermediate to advanced level students. The idea behind it is to guide students at this stage through a serious, engaging topic.

Opening

Different cultures and also to some degree, different people within a culture have dissimilar views of and reactions to failure. Some people react very drastically to certain failures. In Las Vegas, you used to be able to open the windows in tall hotel buildings, but these days you can't because in the past too many people lost all their money and threw themselves many stories down to their death.

On the other end of the spectrum, some people think you really can't fail unless you give up. They think that if you don't achieve the results that you want when you try this time, you've just discovered one way that doesn't work and you can use what you've learned to increase your chances of getting the exact results desired the next time you try. Similarly, some people say a mistake is OK as long as you learn from it.

Prompts

1. How do you personally view failure?
2. Do you think the way you look at failure plays a big part in how successful you become? How so?
3. Do you think being optimistic is important for success? Is it essential?
4. The teacher should give an example of one of his/her own failures.
5. For the students: What are some examples of failures you've had in your life?
6. The teacher should elicit some other examples of failure from the class as a whole before using the following to flesh out the list.
 - o Failure in business
 - o Failure in love
 - o Failure in personal life
 - o Academic failure
 - o Financial failure
 - o Religious failure
 - o Ethical failure
 - o Failure in friendship
7. What are some specific examples of failure in business?
8. What are some specific examples of failure in love?
9. What are some specific examples of academic failure?
10. Do you think your reactions to failure are different according to different failures?
11. How would you react if you ...
 - o failed a test in university?
 - o weren't offered a place in a university?
 - o failed to get a job promotion you were up for?
 - o failed a driver's exam?
 - o failed a vision test or a hearing test?
 - o lost all your money gambling?
 - o didn't make the sports team you want to be on?

12. Do you think your reaction would be different if only you knew about your failure compared to it being a very public failure? How so?
13. Do you get really embarrassed or feel like you lose face when you do poorly at something?
14. Is there anything positive about feeling like you lose face easily? Are there any negatives to it?
15. Do you blush when you get embarrassed?
16. Do you think your ideas about failure and losing face have anything to do with maturity? Explain.
17. Many of the most successful and influential people in the world failed at what they were trying to do before they actually succeeded. How do you think these people looked at failure? Do you have any examples of your own when you failed many times at something but kept trying and finally succeeded?

Role Play

Sometimes you might not react very negatively to your own failures, but you never know how other people in your life will react to your failures. Pair students off to take part in this role-play:

- **Person A:** You were expecting a big job promotion complete with salary raise and added prestige. You found out today that you were passed over. Your wife/husband was counting on you getting this promotion and now you have to go home and break the unhappy news.
- **Person B:** You are the expectant spouse. You have been planning ways all month on how to spend the extra income. Already your spending habits this month have reflected your certainty that your spouse would get this promotion. You are really shocked to hear what your spouse has to say.

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